

Massachusetts Water Resources Commission

Meeting Minutes for March 11, 1999

Commission Members in Attendance:

Mark P. Smith	Designee, Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
Marilyn Contreas	Designee, Department of Housing and Community Development
Richard Thibedeau	Designee, Department of Environmental Management
Duane LeVangie	Designee, Department of Environmental Protection
Lee Corte-Real	Designee, Department of Food and Agriculture
Karen Pelto	Designee, Department of Fisheries, Wildlife & Environmental Law Enforcement
Joe McGinn	Designee, Metropolitan District Commission
Joe Pelczarski	Designee, Coastal Zone Management
Gary Clayton	Public Member
Jeff Kapell	Public Member
Francis Veale	Public Member
Bob Zimmerman	Public Member

Others in Attendance:

Michele Drury	DEM
Nina Danforth	DEM/OWR
Vicki Gartland	DEM
Mike Gildesgame	DEM
Stephanie Lovejoy	DEM/OWR
Deborah Graham	DEM/OWR
Gretchen Roorbach	MWRA
Lorraine M. Downey	MWRA
Eileen Simonson	WSCAC
Michele Cobban Barden	NepRWA
Lou Wagner	Mass Audubon

Comment [rf1]:

Comment [rf2]:

Agenda Item #1: Executive Director's Report:

Update: There is an ongoing project to streamline the various applications a municipality must file to get a new water source on line. These processes include new source approval, Water Management Act, ENF, and perhaps interbasin transfer review. A small group representing DEP, DEM, MEPA, EOEa and representative from MWWA has been meeting to streamline this process. They will provide guidance on the timing of the processes and how to clarify for potential applicants the steps and information needed, with a goal of reducing redundant requests for information.

Secretary Durand's priorities for EOEa: The Secretary has indicated his main priorities as: (1) land protection (2) community preservation (3) environmental education, and the (4) the watershed

approach. He expects to build up existing teams and empower communities to invest in their environment.

A second meeting on I/I by MWRA on their North System: The meeting addressed I/I issues on a regional scale and provided an opportunity to share the communities' knowledge and gain an understanding of the proposals for future action by the MWRA.

A Meeting with the town of Canton will be held in the last week of March to discuss progress in meeting the conditions of the interbasin transfer approval.

Update on Interbasin Transfer Applicants:

- There is a meeting scheduled with the Town of Canton. Progress is being made by the town in meeting the standards required by the WRC under the approval of their interbasin transfer application.
- The towns of Foxborough and Mansfield are applying for approval for an interbasin transfer for their new wells. The goal is for the towns to work together to classify the hydrology of the area.
- Hopkinton is working on a joint water supply/wastewater project with Ashland. Their request for determination of insignificance requires more information. Clarification is needed by Hopkinton on the hydrology related to the project. Ashland is being consulted on this information as well as the information Ashland will need to make a full application for two water supply wells.
- The town of Stoughton is working to provide the information requested concerning its application.
- The public meetings for the MWRA Braintree-Weymouth interceptor project are scheduled on the 24th and 25th of March 1999. Members of the Commission are strongly encouraged to attend at least one of these hearings. Staff will develop a recommendation on this project for the April meeting.

Zimmerman inquired if the WRC will approve MWRA's application, realizing that the 150 million dollar project does not fully solve the overflow problem. MWRA has researched environmental impacts and alternatives, but the Commission needs to inquire if a cost/benefit analysis has been done. It was suggested that retrofitting may be a potential solution, and changing the landscape to retain more stormwater could help. Changing the landscape would require hard engineering.

Agenda Item #2: Adoption of the Minutes of the December 10, 1998 meeting

Smith noted that there needed to be a few typographical corrections to the minutes.

A motion was made by Clayton and seconded by Veale.

TO ADOPT THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF DECEMBER 10, 1998 AS CORRECTED.

The motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item #3: Defining a "stressed" river basin

Gartland presented the discussion of a stressed river basin, as described in the memo to the WRC dated March 9, 1999. She suggested looking at water quantities at times of low flow to measure stress. Flow is the best common denominator to start with; other issues can then be incorporated. USGS is developing an internet program that will allow a user to point-and-click on any given location to obtain low flow statistics. With this cooperative program by the USGS and DEM, a

statistical comparison could be made between present flow rates and water quantities and the natural flows prior to management.

A committee will be assembled to establish what the criteria of a stressed basin are, and where to apply them. Gartland submitted a draft list and requested further recommendations for the committee by the WRC. The sub-committee that defines stress should be from agency staff and other interested parties. It was further suggested that someone from The Nature Conservancy be placed on the committee to discuss their streamflow and habitat approach.

The Commission asked if once a basin was classified as stressed, how it could become unclassified. A change in use would warrant a declassification. The exact criteria of declassification would be determined in the committee. It was also requested of Gartland to research other models by other agencies through out the country.

It was suggested by Pelto that biological responses are perhaps a more sensitive indicator of stress than low flow through hydrological measures. Current health of biological species in basins should be looked at. Simonson further suggested placing emphasis on the native species of each basin.

Smith asked what the intended use of the definition would be, if it is for a screening mechanism or an indicator. Also, what additional tests would be needed to indicate impact. The intended use of the definition should be established for it to be useful.

Smith summarized what was decided by the WRC for the definition of a stressed basin: A smaller committee will be assembled to produce a definition. The goals of the committee should be established, whether it is restoration, protection, or relief of stress. Zimmerman made a suggestion that the group elicit opinions of experts via e-mail.

Agenda Item #4: Discussion and review of proposed changes to Performance Standards for applicants under the Interbasin Transfer Act

Smith and Drury went through the changes in the performance standards after reviewing public comments, as noted in memo of March 11, 1999. The Commission wants these standards to be used for guidance not as a form of regulation. Simonson wanted it to be made clear that it is a guidance document, and not to be used in place of regulations or law.

Questions were raised about the changes to meet Criterion 2. A “viable source” needs to be defined. The WRC needs to develop guidance on making a determination that no viable sources exist.

Under Criterion 3, regarding the action item for residential gpcd, Pelto suggested that high residential gpcd might not be just from toilets. It could be from other water uses. Drury responded that communities with a gpcd above 65 could target the causes and be given the option of restricting outdoor water use, toilet rebate or retrofit programs, or something else the community might devise to lower water uses to meet standards.

Zimmerman suggested that rainwater needs to be connected with ground water, and that this is an infrastructure problem. Rain water should be used as recharge not sewerd out. Water supplies

should be addressed as an environmental issue not a demographic issue. Smith responded that the Watershed Initiative is in place to deal with environmental issues, but we still have to deal with water management issues.

A suggestion was made by the Commission that by calling positive attention to communities that have cutting edge water conservation and management programs, through a rating and evaluating system, other communities may be encouraged to raise their standards. The federal government gives out grants for planning and designing programs to help stressed basins. The definition of stressed basins could further help with this issue.

Regarding the need for information on wastewater, if there are regional meters in place, they should be utilized. The 4,000 gallons per inch diameter for I/I is controversial and a cost/ value effectiveness assessment should be required. Smith suggested that I/I should have a higher level of investigation in certain areas. Also, to the extent possible, there is a need to increase the link between I/I and stream flow and environmental benefits.

For Criterion 7, staff is looking at management plans, or drought plans, for conservation measures. Communities need to have incentives to implement them. The Commission suggested that communities be given the power of enforcement for drought plans. The state should not have the only power of decision on this matter.

Agenda Item #5 Report on the Conserv99 Seminar

Danforth summarized the information provided at the Conserv99 Seminar. Paul Hawken provided the keynote address on having business work with environmentalists. The seminar brought attention to innovative visionaries and cities with innovative ideas for environmental management. Several new products that have been introduced which greatly conserve water, such as the Turbo-Syphon, the Dual Flush, and the horizontal axis washing machine. In California several citizen groups, water protection agencies, and water districts have entered into a "Memorandum of Understanding." They will now all follow and incorporate the 14 Best Management Practices for water conservation and management. Trained staff are sent out to homes to conduct audits.

Washington is using a clever advertising campaigning to convey basic conservation ideas, and the Water Wise Award, from Tampa Bay, showed how new homes can greatly reduce water consumption. These homes received a lot of press and visitors, which creates an incentive for contractors to build these types of homes. Monterey Bay was held as an example of how wastewater can be treated, recycled and used for irrigation in agriculture. This treatment plant will decrease the large demand of water the county requires. The high level of water removal has resulted in sea water intrusion coming very close to source water wells.

Joe Miri provided statistics on states and their conservation plans. Danforth noted that Massachusetts has not done a very good job of using innovative community based approaches for water conservation.

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Minutes approved 8/12/99